## **PRESS ADVISORY**

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Scott Vanhorne, (909) 387-4833



## Supervisors Adopt Campaign Finance Rules

**SAN BERNARDINO—August 21, 2012—**Today, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance that caps campaign contributions for all County elective office candidates and tightens public disclosure requirements on political action groups.

"These campaign finance rules are another example of this Board's commitment to good governance and to putting policy ahead of politics," said Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford, who proposed the campaign finance ordinance along with Vice-Chair Brad Mitzelfelt. "Allowing unlimited campaign contributions erodes public trust in County government because it gives the perception that big donors are buying political influence."

The ordinance mirrors campaign finance limits in place for California Legislature candidates. The current limit is \$3,900 from a single source, including corporations, special interest groups, and individuals, per election cycle. The State adjusts the cap annually based on the Consumer Price Index.

In addition, the ordinance requires all candidates and independent political action committees to electronically report all contributions and expenditures above \$10,000. Currently, State law requires legislative candidates and political committees to electronically report contributions and expenditures above \$50,000.

"Requiring candidates and committees to file this information electronically will allow the public and the media to access it much faster than if it were submitted just on paper, and the public deserves this increased transparency," Rutherford said.

Candidates caught violating the ordinance can be fined up to three times the contribution amount not properly report or \$10,000 whichever is greater. Violation of the ordinance is a misdemeanor. In addition, the ordinance includes civil and administrative penalties for violations.

The County plans to contract with the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to enforce the ordinance because the political watchdog agency has considerable experience enforcing campaign rules and because it can provide an independent review of candidates' and political action groups' monetary activities. Assemblyman Paul Cook introduced a bill to allow the FPPC to contract with the County. The bill was signed into law in July. Other counties and cities with campaign finance rules have created appointed ethics commissions to enforce their laws; however, the commissions can be costly—the City of Los Angeles Ethics Commission budget has grown to about \$2.2 million—and can also present conflict-of-interest issues since members are often appointed by the politicians they are required to police.

"We don't need to add another layer of County government to enforce these rules when there is already an independent, efficient State agency that is more than prepared to step into that role," Rutherford said.

Rutherford made the campaign finance proposal after conferring with a group of former elected officials and local civic leaders she asked to consider and recommend ways to improve ethical accountability in San Bernardino County government. In addition, Rutherford considered the recommendation made by the 2008-2009 Grand Jury, which found that the five Supervisors in office collected more than \$2.3 million in contributions in 2007.

The ordinance will become effective on Jan. 1, 2013.